

## Message Text

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PAGE 01 JERUSA 01924 060857Z

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FM AMCONSUL JERUSALEM

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 6219

INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN IMMEDIATE

AMEMBASSY BEIRUT

AMEMBASSY CAIRO

AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS

AMEMBASSY JIDDA

AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV

C O N F I D E N T I A L JERUSALEM 1924

LIMDIS

AMMAN FOR SECRETARY'S PARTY

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS : PFOR, JO, IS, PLO

SUBJECT : THE WEST BANK AND THE PLO

SUMMARY: WHILE A MAJORITY OF WEST BANKERS SUPPORT THE PLO IN A GENERAL SENSE, IT IS NOT SO CLEAR WHAT THEY BELIEVE THEY ARE SUPPORTING IN TERMS OF SPECIFIC GOALS AND POLICIES. THEY WANT THE PLO TO REPRESENT THEM; SOME ARE NOT ENTHUSIASTIC ABOUT THE PLO ULTIMATELY GOVERNING THEM. THEY WANT A SEPARATE STATE BUT ARE DIVIDED ON THE CRUCIAL CHOICE BETWEEN A "UNITARY DEMOCRATIC STATE" AND TERRITORIAL COMPROMISE WITH ISRAEL. THOSE WHO COUNT MOST LEAN MORE TO THE COMPROMISE, BUT THERE IS CONSIDERABLE UNDERLYING SUPPORT FOR THE OTHER. END SUMMARY.

1. MANY CONFLICTING ASSERTIONS ARE BEING MADE ABOUT WEST BANK ATTITUDES TOWARD THE PLO. THE SECRETARY AND HIS PARTY MAY WELL HEAR THE SUBJECT MENTIONED IN ISRAEL AND ELSEWHERE IN THE AREA. FROM MONTHS OF OBSERVATION AND FROM DISCUSSION WITH ARABS, CONFIDENTIAL

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PAGE 02 JERUSA 01924 060857Z

KNOWLEDGEABLE FOREIGNERS AND NON-OFFICIAL ISRAELIS, I THINK

THERE ARE SOME POINTS THAT CAN BE MADE WITH REASONABLE CONFIDENCE.

2. ISRAELI OFFICIALS CLAIM THAT THE MAJORITY OF WEST BANKERS DO NOT SUPPORT THE PLO BUT ARE AFRAID TO SAY SO FOR FEAR OF POSSIBLE RETRIBUTION. I THINK THEY ARE MISTAKEN. THE MILITARY GOVERNMENT'S CAMPAIGN OF WARNINGS TO WEST BANKERS NOT TO VOICE SUPPORT FOR THE PLO SEEMS TO SUGGEST THAT THEY ARE NOT ENTIRELY CONVINCED THEMSELVES. A LARGE MAJORITY OF WEST BANKERS IDENTIFY WITH THE PLO AS THE ONLY PALESTINIAN ORGANIZATION REPRESENTING THEIR CAUSE IN THE OUTSIDE WORLD, AN ORGANIZATION WHICH MOREOVER HAS BEEN ENJOYING REMARKABLE SUCCESS OF LATE.

3. A RELATIVELY LARGE BODY OF INTELLECTUALS, PROFESSIONALS, STUDENTS AND OTHER YOUNG PEOPLE GO BEYOND THIS GENERAL SENSE OF IDENTIFICATION. THEY ACTIVELY SUPPORT THE ORGANIZATION. FEW OF THEM TAKE PART IN SUBVERSIVE ACTIVITIES, BUT SOME KEEP IN DIRECT TOUCH WITH THE PLO.

4. A SOMEWHAT SMALLER NUMBER OF BOURGEOISIE, BUSINESSMEN FOR THE MOST PART, DO NOT LIKE THE PLO. THEY ARE AFRAID OF THE RADICAL POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC PHILOSOPHY OF SOME PLO ELEMENTS AND THEY FEAR THAT RETURN OF THE PLO TO THE WEST BANK WOULD BRING VIOLENCE (INCLUDING AGAINST THEMSELVES). SOME OF THESE PEOPLE ARE DOUBTLESS AFRAID TO SPEAK OUT AGAINST THE PLO BECAUSE OF FEAR OF RETRIBUTION AND BECAUSE THEY REALIZE THEMSELVES TO BE A MINORITY. (THESE PEOPLE DO NOT, HOWEVER, NECESSARILY SUPPORT HUSSEIN.)

5. A DISTINCTION SHOULD BE MADE BETWEEN THE PLO AS REPRESENTATIVE AND THE PLO AS FUTURE GOVERNMENT. THE CONSENSUS IN FAVOR OF THE REPRESENTATIONAL ROLE IS GREATER AND MIGHT EVEN INCLUDE SOME OF THE BOURGEOIS BUSINESSMEN MENTIONED ABOVE. ON THE GOVERNMENTAL ROLE THERE WOULD BE LESS AGREEMENT. THE NATIONALISTS WOULD STRONGLY ENDORSE IT, THE BUSINESSMEN WOULD FEAR IT AND A LARGE MAJORITY OF OTHERS WOULD NOT THINK MUCH ABOUT IT ONE WAY OR THE OTHER AT THIS STAGE. FOR THEM THE CHOICE HAS BEEN BETWEEN A RETURN OF THE JORDANIANS OR A SEPARATE STATE AND THEY HAVE MUCH PREFERRED THE LATTER WITHOUT CONFIDENTIAL

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PAGE 03 JERUSA 01924 060857Z

TOO MUCH THOUGHT ABOUT WHO WOULD GOVERN IT.

6. THE QUESTION OF WHAT WEST BANKERS THINK THEY ARE SUPPORTING WHEN THEY SUPPORT PLO POLICIES IS MORE COMPLEX. THE CONCEPT OF A STATE SEPARATE FROM JORDAN IS CLEAR AND MOST AGREE WITH IT. THE BIG QUESTION IS WHETHER THEY ARE SUPPORTING THE GOAL OF A "DEMOCRATIC UNITARY STATE" OR BELIEVE IN TERRITORIAL COMPROMISE RECOGNIZING THE EXISTENCE OF ISRAEL.

ATTEMPTS ARE BEING MADE AMONG WEST BANKERS TO DEFINE "PALESTINIAN RIGHTS", WHICH IS WHAT THIS QUESTION BOILS DOWN TO (THE YMCA FOR EXAMPLE IS HOLDING A SERIES OF TALKS BY PROMINENT FIGURES ON THE THEME). MEANWHILE THERE IS LITTLE CLARITY. I THINK MORE SENTIMENT EXISTS AT THE MOMENT FOR A POLICY WHICH WOULD MEAN THE DISMANTLING OF ISRAEL THAN MANY OF MY ARAB ACQUAINTANCES WOULD CARE TO ADMIT. THE PEOPLE WHOSE OPINIONS WILL COUNT MOST, HOWEVER, SEEM TO REALIZE THAT THIS IS NOT A VIABLE POLICY NOT ONLY BECAUSE IT CANNOT BE PUT INTO EFFECT BUT ALSO BECAUSE A UNITARY STATE WOULD NOT BE DESIRABLE IN ITSELF. THIS INCLUDES THE MORE SOPHISTICATED NATIONALISTS, WHO TEND TO HAVE THOUGHT THE QUESTION THROUGH WITH GREATER REALISM. THEY ASSERT THE PLO IS MOVING IN THIS DIRECTION ITSELF. THINKING ABOUT THESE ISSUES HERE IS PRETTY MUCH IN A VACUUM, HOWEVER, AND REALLY SOLID OPINIONS ARE NOT LIKELY TO FORM UNTIL PEOPLE SEE WHAT THE REAL POSSIBILITIES ARE.  
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